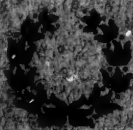


# NOTES ON READING

- BY -

S. H. CLARK.



TORONTO

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## GENERAL INTRODUCTION

—TO—

# READING LESSONS

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It is believed that the reading lessons contained in this series are the first attempt to present in an orderly and philosophic manner the difficulties the pupils have in learning to read.

There is very little doubt that the reading lesson hardly pays for the time spent upon it. All authorities are agreed that, except in rare cases, pupils do not read any better at the end of the school year than they do at the beginning, except that they may pronounce with a little more facility or are possessed of a somewhat wider vocabulary. In many class-rooms reading becomes a lesson in composition, spelling, definition, and the like.

The method in vogue in certain districts of telling pupils about "inflections," and "time," and "kinds of emphasis," is certainly faulty. On the other hand, very little more progress has been made by those who, in a very general and vague manner, tell the pupil to "get the thought." Again, by methods heretofore in use it was impossible for the teacher in any given grade to determine how much real knowledge of reading a pupil had who had just been promoted from a lower grade.

In the lessons here presented it is impressed upon the pupil not only that he must get the thought, but he is shown how to get it. The various difficulties of reading are presented one at a time, and further, are so graded that the least difficult shall precede the more complex.

It is well known that the reading lesson, as a reading lesson, gets little or no preparation by the pupils. By the method here laid down definite preparation is a necessity, and the lesson which, as a rule, is very ill prepared, may now be studied at home with a very definite object in view; and, more important still, the pupil can be held responsible for definite results.

It must be remembered that the young pupil knows little of inflections, emphasis, etc., and cares still less about them. While the teacher may be thoroughly conversant with the whole range of vocal technique in reading, he should never use technical terms with the pupil, especially with the younger pupil. This is the very essence of the present method, which is based upon a well established psychological law: If the thought is right the expression will be right. We must remember that shyness, and other forms of self-consciousness (which so often mar the reading), are really but signs that the pupil's mental action is awry. The reading may be more quickly and more permanently improved by eradicating the self-consciousness than by resorting to technical drills. Make the pupil *want to read*, and the chances are strongly in favour of his losing self-consciousness.

While it is not possible in the space allotted the author of these articles, to give the fullest possible instruction, yet these lessons will serve a definite purpose by presenting to the pupils, in a rational order, the various difficulties

everyone has to overcome in learning to read. There may be certain phrases of technique which a teacher may miss in this series of lessons, but it is certain that if they are carefully taught the pupils will improve not only along the particular line laid down in each lesson, but along the whole line of reading in general.

Very little is said in these lessons concerning emotions, etc. It is believed that it is wiser to defer any attempt to get intense feeling and emotion until a later period.

This method is introduced in the hope that the measure of a pupil's progress will not be gauged by the number of lessons he covers in a given period. It is better to prepare carefully and philosophically six or eight lessons in one half of the school year than to endeavour to cover three times as many in the usual careless fashion. The teacher may be sure that when the first six or eight lessons are thus carefully prepared, the progress thereafter will be more rapid. There is no doubt that the pupil who will spend two years in this graded work will be able to read any ordinary selection with ease to himself, and pleasure to the listener.

In conclusion it is urged (1) that the teacher use additional examples under each new principle in order that the pupil may have the principle impressed upon him by selecting new examples for himself and by reading them aloud in class; (2) that the same lesson be repeated as many times, with the same or new illustrations, as may be necessary to assure the teacher that the class has thoroughly grasped the spirit of the lesson; and that (3) the teacher will insist upon most careful and adequate preparation. So, and only so, can we hope to teach reading.



## NOTES.

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### LESSON I.

The object of this lesson is to impress upon the mind of the pupil the fact that the words have no meaning **unless they stimulate thought**. Too much stress cannot be laid on this lesson by the teacher. **Nothing is so conducive to good reading as practice after the manner laid down in this lesson**. It is, perhaps, needless to say that the teacher should be on his guard not to teach inflections or pauses as such. No other aim should be held in mind but that of getting the pupil to see clearly and express forcibly.

### LESSON II.

In this lesson we begin exercises in what might be called "mental technique". It must be borne in mind that these lessons are planned with the object of presenting one element at a time, and the pupil must not be expected to read well where he has had no previous drill. In this lesson, therefore, the pupil should be held responsible for what he has learned in the first and second lessons only. It must further be remembered that all corrections should be made by putting such questions as, "Is that the whole picture?" or, "Have you not given us more than one picture?" Never tell a pupil to make a pause here or a pause there, or read faster or slower.

Such corrections are useless. We must learn to rely upon the thinking to govern the rate of speed or the length and frequency of the pauses.

### LESSON III.

This lesson deals with the succession of ideas. The lesson itself shows plainly the end to be attained. Nothing will so much help the pupils to carry a long and intricate sentence in mind as drills such as are suggested here.

It is not for a moment contended that all the inflections are rising in long sentences. The falling inflection will often occur where the phrase, for some reason or another, is particularly important, even though the sentence does not conclude with the phrase. This, however, the teacher can easily determine for himself. For the present it is sufficient if the habit of continually dropping the voice at the end of every phrase can be even partially overcome.

### LESSON IV.

In this lesson we enter upon the study of subordinate phrases. It is well to remember that the common rule about "dropping the voice and reading faster" does not always apply to the reading of subordinate ideas. The whole question is, how much is the idea worth? If it is unimportant, perhaps the rule will apply; but there are many cases where the interjected phrase or sentence is very important, and in such cases the time may be very much slower than it is when reading the principal sentence, grammatically speaking. Much time should be given to exercises under this head. It is the first step towards introducing variety into the reading.



Instructions to pupils, telling him how to read such examples, should be avoided at all times. The one object should be to get the pupil to feel subordinate ideas and their relation to the principal ideas.

#### LESSON V.

We here come to the study of transitions. These are of many kinds, and only a few examples can be given. If, however, the underlying idea in this lesson is impressed upon the pupil, there will be little trouble about the transitions under other circumstances. The study of transition is another aid to variety in reading.

#### LESSON VI.

Very little comment is necessary, except to warn the teacher against speaking about the various *kinds* of emphasis. No matter what the kind, the thought will find its natural channel if the conditions are right. It is true that sometimes a word is made prominent by inflection (rising, falling, circumflex), sometimes by slower time, sometimes by force alone. But let us remember these various forms are the results of various forms of thinking. Get that right, the rest will follow.

It is further worth noting that the best authorities use "emphasis" as signifying any means of making the thought stand out. Hence I would urge the teacher not to use the term "emphasis" at all. If a pupil errs tell him he has not given you the central idea.

#### LESSON VII.

The task of teaching pupils to read with feeling is full of difficulties. In the seventh and eighth lessons I have

tried to remove some of the difficulty, but the sympathetic co-operation of the teacher is needed here more than in any part of the work. The imagination must be stimulated—the child's every day experience must be drawn upon, or failure is inevitable. Above everything else do not ask pupils to represent emotions that are beyond their experience, such as intense pathos, great solemnity, etc. Reserve these for the upper grades of the high school. Again, avoid the baser emotions, such as anger, hate, jealousy. I have not the space to enlarge on this, but the whole trend of the best psychology is in favour of my admonition. Select extracts in which the characters manifest simple, noble, inspiring and uplifting feeling. Patriotism, self sacrifice, love of nature, these are the themes with which the imagination of the pupils should come into contact.

I heartily advise the teacher to gather a dozen or more extracts and speeches (from this book and elsewhere) under three or four significant heads, such as patriotism, love of nature, etc., and keep the class at each phase until definite results are accomplished. I have no hesitation in deprecating the method that compels teachers to teach any lesson simply because it follows the preceding lesson, numerically speaking. The proper method is hinted at the introduction to the Third Book. I would now add a few words to justify the method there suggested. In many readers there may be two patriotic selections; one at the beginning, one at the end. Probably a year will intervene between these two. Is it not good pedagogy to take up these two lessons in succession? To keep the pupils in a patriotic mood for five days in succession must be certainly productive of better results than can be ob-

tained by the other method of lesson one, lesson two, lesson three. So also with other emotions. In conclusion I might add that when a certain emotion is present in only one or two paragraphs of a selection, only those paragraphs need be prepared.

### LESSON VIII.

The most important fact to be borne in mind in endeavouring to develop the pupil's sympathy with what he describes is this: Imitation of sounds, and gestures, and movement is a very low order of art. We can't imitate thunder, but we can show in our voices the awe that it inspires. When we unconsciously hurry our reading under the impulse the imagination receives from contemplating, we will say, the rapid movement of a cavalry charge, we do so not in imitation of, but in sympathy with the picture. This is not primarily a question of art, but of nature. It is only ignorant teaching that says to a pupil, "Is that the way the thunder roars," or "Read more rapidly; don't you see that you are describing the flight of the horses." Furthermore, if we read slowly a passage describing a funeral procession, there is no conscious imitation of slowness, but a sympathy with the solemnity, stateliness and dignity of the occasion.

A very little observation will show us whether the imitation is conscious or sympathetic. In the former case the voice will be expressing merely speed or slowness. In the latter, there will be speed or slowness, too, but accompanied by an indefinable and yet recognizable *quality* of voice, which is the expression of our sympathy. This is an infallible criterion.

Lastly, it must be urged that we give more time to

this work. The imagination cannot be developed in a week or a month ; and unless there is imagination, there can be no sympathy. It is difficult to restrain one's self and not dwell longer on the value of the training of imagination. I have no hesitation in saying that it is that feature of education the most neglected and the least understood. Such training as is here suggested will do, in many cases, much to bring about a more favourable condition of affairs. But it takes time, and plenty of it. The teacher should read to the class quite often such passages as are likely to stimulate the imagination. Make the class follow attentively and get them to give back the picture, as far as possible, in minutest detail. Do this again and again, and improvement must follow. Just in proportion as the imagination is stimulated may we hope for a better class of reading.

## LESSON IX.

Contrasts are of two kinds ; logical and emotional. The former are largely antithesis, such as, "I said John not Charles," and will need but casual attention. The pupils will perceive them without difficulty. The other class needs much care. Perhaps the most important fact concerning these that the teacher must bear in mind, is that their successful rendition depends upon the pupil's keeping both parts of the contrast in mind, *the first serving as a back-ground or relief for the second*. Much time should be spent on this lesson, with these and additional examples.

## LESSON X.

The climax is a very important feature in reading. It stimulates the imagination and feelings, and through them,

the voice. It should be remembered that no definite method of expressing a climax vocally can be laid down. In one case the pitch may rise ; in another it may fall. Sometimes the force increases ; at other times it diminishes. Hence, the admonition so often given must be repeated ; don't tell the pupil to raise his voice, or to speak louder. Work at his imagination. If there is a climax there it will come out in his expression.

Frequent drills in climax will do much to give flexibility, power and range to the voice. And that, too, in a far more rational way than through any mechanical exercises in pitch and force.

## LESSON I.

We are going to study how to read; and the first thing we must know is, what is reading?

If we were together in the schoolroom, I could tell you what I have to say; but since we are so far apart I must write it. Now before we answer the first question, let us try to get an answer to another. What is speaking? Speaking is telling someone what I am thinking or feeling. So, if you were in my school I could tell you the thoughts I have about reading. But you are not, and so I must write them. Now we are ready to answer the question, What is reading? Reading is getting thought from the printed or written page.

Let us go a little further. Suppose I want to teach you reading through the printed page, what do I do? I first think over very carefully what I have to say, and then I choose and write the words that will give you my meaning. But remember, you must study my words and think about them as carefully as I did when I wrote them.

Have you been attentive so far? Let us see. Can you tell me what speaking is? What reading is? If you can't, don't you see you haven't been paying attention?

Getting thought from the printed page should be just like listening carefully to my speaking. Yes, you must be more careful in reading, because I am not there to explain things to you, or to repeat my words. You have only the printed words, and if you don't listen very



carefully to what they say, you won't understand me. Now let us see whether this is clear. Here is a sentence. Can you see what I see?

"The next day, which was Saturday, the king called his generals and some of his friends to the royal tent, and told them, in a quiet voice, that at daybreak on Tuesday he was going to return to London and give up the war."

Now take your eyes off the book and tell your teacher all you saw, and tell it in just the order the pictures occur on the page. If you miss any steps you must read again and again until you see the whole thought so clearly that it seems real; then I am sure you will be able to tell it correctly. You need not use my words, just use your own language.

When you have done this, you are ready to take the next step. Read the sentence to the class so that you make them see just what you see. Be sure you never forget this last remark. You must remember that unless you *try* to make them see the pictures you have in mind, they will be very likely not to understand you.

What have we now been doing? First, we studied the meaning of the words; second, we got a lot of pictures; and third, we tried to give these pictures to others. So we see that there are two kinds of reading; one for ourselves, the other for others. The first kind must always go before the second; for if we haven't anything in our minds to tell, how can we give it to others? Let us remember then, that reading for others is just like talking to them, and unless we get from the page just the thought the writer had in mind, we can't give that thought to another. Sometimes it is not easy to get this

thought, but if you will study carefully, it will get to be clearer and clearer, until at last it is just as easy to understand as if it had been your own.

I want to give you a short drill, and then our first lesson will be over.

"In the summer the grass is green, but it turns brown in the fall."

Can you imagine how green grass looks? How brown grass looks? Do you notice that fall is the time when grass is brown? Again.

"He was a very tall man, with light, curly hair, tanned skin, and blue eyes. His shoulders were stooped like those of a farmer or of one who had been digging in the mines."

Close your eyes and then call up the picture of this man. Do you see him as a real man? Now read this sentence aloud so that your class-mates may get the same picture that you have.

These are the three things we have learned in our first lesson, and they are very, very important. We must *get* the thought, we must *hold* the thought and we must *give* the thought. This is reading aloud.

We shall not have another lesson for some time, but until we do I want you to be getting these pictures from everything you read. From your geography lesson, your history lesson and even your arithmetic lesson. I am sure you will get these lessons quicker and better than you ever have before.

## LESSON II.

You remember that in our last lesson we learned that we must first get the thought before we could read. Now we are to study how to get the thought.

Did you ever notice how you think? If you hear the word "car," what do you think of? Some of a horse car; some of an electric car; and some of a steam car. So you see the word "car" by itself doesn't give us a very clear picture.

The words "I saw" don't mean very much either. For unless we know what you saw we get nothing to think about.

The two words "in a" don't mean much, and by this time you know why.

Let us put all these words together and add a word or two; "I saw a man in a steam car." Now we have a clear picture. What do we learn from this? We learn that a single word doesn't give us a clear picture and that it takes three, and four, and sometimes many words to give us a picture. We can think "I saw a man," or "in a steam car;" but we get a complete sentence only when we put these two groups of words together. We also notice that while it takes just a moment to see a picture it often takes many words to describe it.

What we have done is called grouping, that is, reading several words together, just as we read the syllables of a word. Let us try some examples.

"Charles gave a sled to his brother." Here we have two groups, one ending at "sled," the other at "brother."

"I went to King Street with my sister to buy a new hat." Here we have three groups. Can you pick them out?

The last thing we are to learn in this lesson is that every group of words has a picture in it, and that we must not read aloud any word until we have got the thought or the picture in the group.

"When-our-school-closes-for-the-summer-vacation, some-of-us-go-to-the-country, others-go-to-the-lakes, some-remain-on-the-farm, and-many-stay-in-the-city."

For to-morrow's lesson I want you to bring in the groups in the following examples, putting hyphens between the words of each group, just as we did in the sentence about the summer vacation :

Stanza 5 of "The Graves of a Household."

Stanza 1 of "Frost."

Stanza 1 of "The Indian Hunter."

I should like you to keep on studying grouping for a week or so, and in every reading lesson you have I want you to be sure to get the groups. In this way you will get a great many more pictures from your reading lesson than you have ever got before.